IN The GLARE of The LOCAL FOOTLIGHTS.

Some Strenuous Times Ahead Of Local Theatergoers

The year has certainly opened with a rush so far as the local theaters are concerned. January has brought an unusual array of really attractive attractions, and February promises even better. New York would consider it a big month that brought its first production of two such plays as "The Music Master" and "His House In Order," not to mention a repertoire engagement from Willard, and a bunch of as good musical comedies as "Marrying Mary," "About Town," and "The Spring Chicken." Yet New York has sixty theaters to Washington's six. And New York is "a good theater town" aside from its being the producing center of the country, and Washington, for its apathy and indifference, is accounted one of the worst—stands about third from the bottom of the list. So that on the whole Washington has this last month been better treated than it deserves.

Tomorrow night it is to have what is practically a first production of real importance. "A Marriage of Reason" deserves attention for three reasons. It is by Hartley Manners, which should constitute an appeal to the discriminating theatergoer who has—as one expressed it a few days ago—"learned to choose the plays he wants to see by the playwright rather than the star." There are more good actors in the world than good playwrights.

However, to the great majority who go to see a player rather than a play, the fact that Kyrle Bellew, graceful, good looking, and a capable actor, is at the head of the company, should count for much—and the character of his supporting company, including such names as Frederic de Belleville, Julia Dean, and, last, but not least, Fannie Ward, should count for more. For Fannie Ward contributes the third reason for interest in the new play. It is Fannie Ward's return to the stage—pretty, popular Fannie Ward of a decade ago. They took her over to London. She made good; created a sensation; married a multi-millionaire (which is much better than a title) and retired. Her marriage has proved happy; she has had all that money and position can give her; been presented at court; but the lure of the footlights has been too strong for her. So here she is back again.

The play has not been to New York. It has not been anywhere. It was tried on the Connecticut canine Friday night. Washington cannot complain that it is getting another town's leavings. It is to be hoped it will appreciate the fact; but it probably won't.

The other two plays at the uptown theaters have both been here before. And they have both earned their welcome. Of the two "The Girl of the Golden West" will be new to the larger number. It was played here last year very early in the season, when Washington had hardly as yet come home from its vacation and settled down for the winter. Both are intensely, aggressively American. Edeson, in fact, who plays "Strongheart" has made rather a specialty of Americanism. His present play is said to have drawn its leading character from a personal friend of the star, Antonio Apache by name, a Harvard graduate and football expert. Apache was a man of the world, spent six months of each year in New York spending the balance of the year with his Indian people on the plains. Edeson, looking about for an American character in an American play by an American author, brought to the attention of William C. De Mille his remarkable redskin friend. Then "Strongheart" was written.

Mr. Edeson tells a little story on his friend illustrative of the Indian character. He and Antonio had been to the horse show at Madison Square Garden. With two friends after the performance they repaired to the Cafe Martin for refreshments. The Indian's remarkable appearance attracted the attention of a young gilded fool who directed a battery of remarks toward their table. The climax was reached when the young man stood up and with flushed face and tangled language addressed himself to Mr. Edeson's party and particularly the Indian, saying:

"Say, fellow, what in h— are you, anyway?"

The Indian, a man of tremendous strength, arose, did not seem to be embarrassed in the least, and, laying hands upon his insulter, placed him outside the front door with no wrath but a trace of bitterness in his voice, saying:

"I am an American, but not of your tribe."

On the whole, the coming week promises well, but the coming month promises even better. The National has a magnificent list for February—Forbes Robertson, Richard Mansfield, William Gillette, and Maxine Elliott. Can you beat that? And March is about as good. It starts with Faversham in the Squaw Man, Fay Templeton in Forty Five Minutes from Broadway, Robert Mantell in Shakespearean repertoire, and Ellen Terry in repertoire. Later it gets "The Lion and the Mouse," and "Hypocrites," and probably the Crane-Jeffreys combination in "She Stoops to Conquer."

The Belasco begins February with a week of grand opera, under the direction of Katie Wilson Greene, with some really good singers in the leading parts; then James T. Powers and "The Blue Moon" come in for a week; next "The Love Route," which has been one of the season's successes; and finally, Mrs. Fiske in "The New York Idea." The March dates are not definitely arranged, but some of the good things scheduled for that house are bound to come then.

To the Columbia February will bring first of all, "The Spoilers," practically new, for it opens in Baltimore tomorrow; Lawrence D'Orsay, and "The Embassy Ball;" Keller the magician, and May Irwin, in "Mrs. Wilson Andrews." So that, on the whole, if January has been strenuous, February is likely to prove more so—and for a town with only half a dozen theaters, Washington has no reason to complain.

The burning of the Academy last week was a real loss to a very large playgoing public. It probably had an evenly larger patronage than any house in town, except, possibly, Chase's. Its plays certainly were not of the art-for-art's-sake type, but if the first function of the theater is to entertain—and that is a generally accepted axiom—the Academy performed that function more thoroughly than any house in town. And if as Harry Arthus Jones says its second function is "to entertain rightly," the Academy still had a clear conscience. For its plays were always of the cleanest; their moral tone beyond question; their teachings, first, last, and all the time, those of robust virtue.

Everyone sympathizes with J. W. Lyons, the popular and efficient manager of the house, and hopes that it will not be long before he has another local theater in his care. It could not be in better hands.

As for the Academy attractions, many of them will undoubtedly go to the Majestic, which is also a Stair and Hamlin house; some few may be produced at halls that can be arranged for the purpose; some will have to pass Washington by this season. By next season, it is to be hoped, the new Academy will be ready. Here's luck to it—and to Mr. Lyons—and to all the others concerned in it!

M. McD.

FANNIE WARD IN "A MARRIAGE OF REASON" COLUMBIA.

FORBES ROBERTSON IN "CAESER AND CLEOPATRA."

ROBERT EDESON AND MARY BOLAND IN "STRONGHEART" NATIONAL.

BLANCHE BATES AND FRANK KEENAN IN "THE GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST" BELASCO

BESSIE BURNE'S AND LEW WILLIAMS IN "UNDER SOUTHERN SKIES" MAJESTIC

RALPH STEWART AS GLENISTER IN "THE SPOILERS."

HOW SIEGFRIED CAME TO BE SO VERY LONG

Here is a story for the youngsters to paste in the covers of their copies of Kipling's "Just So Stories." It is about Siegfried.

Siegfried is long—very long. He is a dachshund, with the emphasis on the "dachs," and he winds his length slowly around the stage in Robert Edeson's comedy drama, "Strongheart," and has a very high opinion of his importance in the cast. Some admiring children were holding conversations with Siegfried the other day, and Robert Edeson joined them.

"Do you know how Siegfried came to be so long?" he asked them. There was an excited chorus of questions, begging the story.

"Well, a man wrote about it in a New York paper one day, and that is how I happen to know," continued Mr. Edeson, "and he said that once upon a time in the Garden of Eden the dachshund and the parrot were very good friends. They were chums. Now, it seems that the parrot had a very naughty habit of hiding away in a tree whenever Adam wanted to speak to him. One day Adam called all the animals and birds and things around him because he wanted to give them a lecture in how to be good, and continue always to be good. 'Now, children,' he said, 'be good and never be naughty.' But just then he noticed that the parrot was not there. 'Where is that parrot?' he said, 'tell that naughty parrot to come here instantly.'

"'He is out there talking to himself, in a tree; he is afraid you will take his voice away,' spoke up the dachshund, sticking to his absent friend.

"'You go instantly and tell him to come here,' said Adam.

"'O, I don't want to,' answered the dachshund, sulkily.

"'Go, sir, at once, and tell him to come here,' said Adam. 'And be quick about it, too.'

"'I won't,' answered the stubborn doggie, shoving his hands away down in his pockets and twisting his heel in the ground.

"'You will, and at once, sir,' shouted Adam, angrily, 'go right now and don't be long.'

"'Aw, rats,' growled the saucy pup, 'I will be as long as I like,' turning peevishly away.

"'What?' roared the thoroughly enraged Adam, 'you'll be as long as you like? No, sir, just for that you'll be as long as I like. Be that long!' And that is why Siegfried's grandfather and Siegfried after him are so long.

"So long."

Behind the Footlights.

Miss Fanny Ward, who is leading woman for Kyrle Bellew in "A Marriage of Reason," is in private life Mrs. "Joe" Lewis of London. Mr. Lewis is one of the famous group of South African mining millionaires who rose to fortune with Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit. Miss Ward's jewels, furs, horses and yacht, town house and country houses, are the envy and despair of all her sisters on the stage. Her jewels now in this country are insured for $750,000 and, like Melba, Miss Ward carries a private detective to safeguard them. Her collection of precious stones is said to be superior even to the prima donna's.

Chauncey Olcott tells this story apropos the useless question: "A man stood before a mirror in his room, his face lathered and an open razor in his hand. His wife came in. She looked at him and said: 'Are you shaving?' The man, a foe to surplusage, replied fiercely, 'No! I'm blacking the kitchen range. Where are you—out driving or at a matinee?'"

Two Hamlets and two Shylocks are to be the dramatic treat afforded the patrons of the New National within five weeks. The first presentation of the two characters will be by Forbes Robertson; the second two by Robert Mantell.

"Parted on Her Bridal Tour" is the name of the first Laura Jean Libby novel to reach the stage. Manager Blaney announces that he will make an elaborate production of the play in Brooklyn early in February and that at the first performance Miss Libby will positively sit in a box.

John L. Kearney, who plays the leading part in the "Mayor of Tokio," is an accomplished steeplechase rider, and during the engagement of the company last week in Toronto he rode a match race at the Woodbine track, as the result of a wager between two well known horsemen at the King Edward Hotel over a late supper at which Mr. Kearney was present. Neither of the horse owners were in condition to ride and as professional jockeys were barred it was necessary to get gentlemen riders. The race was over the full steeplechase course, two and one-half miles, for $1,000 a side, the winner to donate $1,000 to the King's Hospital for the establishment of a free bed for injured jockeys. Kearney won.

Rex Beach, the author of "The Spoilers," the story from which he and James MacArthur have made the play, is a native Chicagoan, and used to count up columns of figures in a wholesale house there before the call of the wild got into his blood and he went to Alaska in the great gold rush of 1900. Now he writes stories, magazine articles, and plays, and draws dividends from a mine that he owns up in the Nome district.

In the February Delineator, Fred Thompson, who writes of his experiences, "Fooling the Public," tells of his conception of Luna Park, and the building of it. In financing the big pleasure park they exhausted all their capital. He says:

"The constant drain had very nearly exhausted our funds, and when it came to two days before the opening Dundy decided to take the last amount we had in the bank—some $2,000—and use it for change on the opening night.

"He drew it out and put it in the safe at Luna, and the next day or two bills came in C. O. D. so fast that, without realizing it, his $2,000 was gone—the last of a million dollars invested, 1,400 employes on the pay roll and only $22 with which to open the park!

"But somehow we made this small sum serve the purpose, and as it happened, the show proved such a success that we were not embarrassed in this way on the next day."

A feature of "The Girl of the Golden West" production, in which Blanche Bates begins her engagement at the Belasco tomorrow night, is the quartet which sings all of the entr'acte music. Their program is a varied one and numbers about fourteen selections. These are songs which were popular in the mining districts of California at the time represented in the action of the play.

Cheridah Simpson, playing the name part in the De Koven-Charles Klein comic opera, "Red Feather," sang a solo at the Sunday morning service in the great Mormon Cathedral in Salt Lake City on January 13. The company had played the Friday and Saturday previous, and Miss Simpson made such a pronounced success that a number of the Mormon elders made her a handsome offer to sing for them. Her accompaniment was the famous organ, said to be the largest and one of the most perfect in the world.

An English periodical, the Pelican, offers a yearly prize to the best dressed woman in England. For five consecutive years Miss Fannie Ward has headed the poll. She was presented at court last season.

In an article on stage dressmaking in a recent number of Costume, A. W. Pinero says:

"Our plays are for the most part over-dressed, with extravagance, vulgarity, and inappropriateness obtaining in place of artistic fitness. The new costumes have to some extent frequently undone the results of undress rehearsals, the actresses no longer representing the drama as they did before the dressmaker sent home their gowns, while the variety of their impersonations is swamped by the uniformity of their fashions."

Mrs. Leslie Carter, who was to have opened in "Cleo" tomorrow night in Cleveland, canceled that engagement about a week ago. The production was said not to be ready. It was announced, however, that she would open in New York on schedule time, following "The Hypocrites," at the Hudson, on February 11. Now Edwin Milton Royle, author of her play, has secured a temporary injunction restraining her from producing it. Mrs. Carter seems to be having troubles these days. Altogether, her friends are wondering if she's not asking herself why she ever did it.

Dwight Elmendorf has found the subject of Norway entirely too large to be included in a single lecture, and has divided it into "Southern Norway," and "The Land of the Midnight Sun." Both lectures are to be given with the aid of excellent moving pictures and colored views.

Campbell Gollan, who plays McNamara in "The Spoilers," is hoping the play will never reach North Dakota, or if it does that it will have another McNamara. This character in the play is a very thinly veiled prototype of Alexander MacKenzie, a political boss of that State, who was interested in the conspiracy to loot the rich mines of the Nome district under injunction and "fake" receivership proceedings, which were successful for a time, but finally resulted in the interference of the United States Government with the result that several corrupt officials were summarily removed from office. This background of official thievery was used by Rex Beach in writing first his book and later, in collaboration with James MacArthur, his play.

A report from Christiania, Norway, says that Odo Neilson, the Danish actress, is on her way to this country. She has a contract to make a three months' tour of the United States, playing in cities where there is a considerable Scandinavian population.

When "Strongheart" appears at the New National this week, the entire football team of Georgetown University will attend the theater in a body and appear upon the stage during the big game in the second act, which leads one to wonder whether, when Mr. Edeson takes "Strongheart" to London—as it is said he will in April—he will press the Oxford football players into service as "supers" to add realism to the scene.

Blanche Bates now holds the record for the number of consecutive performances given by a woman star in one play in New York. She has appeared in "The Girl of the Golden West," David Belasco's great drama of California, exactly 457 times in the metropolis.

W. J. Ferguson, the veteran actor, who, by the way, was a call boy on the stage of Ford's Theater the night that President Lincoln was murdered, has been lying seriously ill in a hospital at Youngstown, Ohio. He has been supporting Virginia Harned in "The Love Letter," and his interpretation of Jobelin, an old French beau and Mme. Revillon's ex-husband, was one of the very bright spots of the production. He is reported as convalescing and hopes soon to rejoin the company.

Henry W. Savage is certainly collecting a regular swarm of "Butterflies." He has now engaged Signorina Dora de Fillippe, as prima donna in "Madame Butterfly," to alternate with the four others already singing the role.

"Here's good health to honest men, and damnation to lawyers," says Daxtry in "The Spoilers," and that couplet represents the sentiment of every miner in Alaska. It was crooked lawyers that robbed the miners under guise of the law, and now a miner wouldn't touch a lawyer with a totem pole.

Miss Desiree Lazard, appearing as Maud Weston, in "Strongheart," is a well-known Washington girl. She is the sister of A. D. Marks, a local newspaper man.

When Grace George gets to Chicago she and Wright Lorimer are to give some special matinees of "The Wild Duck." Miss George's engagement at the Illinois in the Hopwood-Pollock comedy, "Clothes," will be concurrent with Mr. Lorimer's engagement in McVicker's in "The Shepherd King." Mr. Lorimer presented "The Wild Duck" in October last in Boston.

Both Kyrle Bellew and his leading man, Frederic de Belleville, in "A Marriage of Reason" are accounted among the best fencers in the world. There is a keen rivalry between these two accomplished players, but to their regret there are no duels in the new play.

Miss Blanche Walsh, besides being a clever actress, is an inventor, and in her home on West Fifty-fifth street, New York, she has a machine shop fully equipped. She has just invented a new-fangled wheel for automobiles which makes punctures and blowouts impossible. She claims it adds 35 per cent to the speed of the vehicle and does away with slipping belts.

The cast which is to do the musical version of "The Galloper," opening about a week hence out in Illinois is busy rehearsing. It is noticed that it includes Helen Hale and Lucy Tonge, two of the bright particular stars of "The Man From Now." From which it is inferred, and correctly, that "The Man From Now" has become the man that was. Bulger is to revive George Ade's "The Night of the Fourth," produced several years ago with Bulger and "Sherry" Mathews in the cast. It had a limited run and has lain in mothballs since.

A new epoch is dawning in French drama. It may be summarized as the advent of the stage dog. The presence of the new artist "on four" is now signalized at no fewer than three of the leading theaters of Paris, and in each case he cuts no mean figure. And there can be no question about the artistic temperament of the newcomer, because